DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 780 JC 720 016

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TITLE The History of the General Curriculum of Forest Park Community College in Saint Louis, Missouri From its Beginning to Fall, 1971.
INSTITUTION Saint Louis Junior Coll. District, Mo. Forest Park Community Coll.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum; *Experimental Curriculum; *General Education; *Junior Colleges; *Remedial Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Missouri

ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 1965 the General Curriculum Program at Forest Park Community College (Missouri) has fluctuated within identifiable limits and evolved from a totally non-credit situation to one of developmental credit that could count as elective units in degree and transfer programs. The program has shifted from a 2-semester to a 1-semester program. Problems recurring are faculty turnover, unrealistic expectations of students and faculty, faculty-centered decision making without student input, and inadequacy in the areas of communication among staff, consistent, systematic institutional research, and interrelatedness among courses. One of the reasons for the existence of the General Curriculum as a separate division was to create the possibility of an interrelated curriculum. This possibility has never been realized. Despite the shortcomings of the General Curriculum it is regarded as a successful attempt in remedial education by many students and faculty members. (MN)

ED057780

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THE HISTORY OF THE GENERAL CURRICULUM

OF

FOREST PARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

IN

SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

FROM ITS BEGINNING TO FALL, 1971

BY

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INFORMATION

In Against the Odds, William Moore, Jr., notes that "Three hundred and seven community colleges sent representatives to observe the General Curriculum at Forest Park Community College in St. Louis, Missouri." Moore regrets that few of them were from institutions that had any intention of imitating the General Curriculum. Moore regrets this because he views the General Curriculum as a valid attempt to help educationally disadvantaged students fight against the odds to acquire an education beyond high school. The history of this highly publicized experiment in community college education is worth investigating.

In January, 1963, the St. Louis - St. Louis County Junior College District opened its doors. The community colleges of this District were "open-door" colleges. College parallel, technical-vocational, and extension programs were offered from the outset, but it became apparent shortly that more was going to have to be done. At Forest Park Community College the fall session 1964 saw 278 students placed on enforced withdrawal, 318 students placed on academic probation, 95 officially withdrew and at least that many stopped going without ever contacting school officials. In short, 691 students or 46 per cent of the on-campus enrollment failed to complete the semester successfully. This happened despite the practice of limiting the course load of students regarded as academic risks and despite the effort to offer three developmental courses to those wanting remedial help. This situation led Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Dean of Instruction, to set up the Forest Park Community College Opportunity Program Committee during the fall session 1964.

The Opportunity Program Committee studied programs offered in other institutions and met irregularly over a three month period to discuss findings. All major publishers were contacted and copies of suitable materials were forwarded to committee members. Materials were collected from Casper College, Casper, Wyoming; Bakersfield College, Bakersfield, California; Chicago City Junior College, Chicago, Illinois; Miami-Dade Junior College, Miami, Florida; and American River Junior College, Sacramento, California. In addition, the committee visited the basic program of Chicago City Junior College system and seems to have been strongly influenced by it. In January, 1965, the committee submitted its recommendations.

The committee recommended the establishment of an Opportunity Program to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged youth. They recommended the following goals for the new program.

1. Meeting the needs of students in the lower range of the ability spectrum.
2. Improving standards in transfer courses by removing students incapable of making a contribution or of achieving significant benefit.

3. Providing educationally disadvantaged students with intensive counseling on an individual and group basis to:
   a. Minimize emotional factors inhibiting success.
   b. Aid students to assess realistically their potential and to relate this to vocational goals.
   c. Identify students incapable of benefiting from any college program and refer them to community resources through accurate and complete knowledge of apprenticeship requirements, job opening, training courses, as well as other community resources.
4. Salvaging the academically able students from this group who might be upgraded to the point where they could be successful in regular technical or transfer programs.

The committee further recommended that the Opportunity Program seek to accomplish these general goals through a one-year curriculum broken down as follows:

1. About two-fifths of the program would be devoted to general education in the areas of mathematics, science, social science, and health.
2. About two-fifths of the program would stress basics in reading and oral and written communication.
3. About one-fifth of the program would involve concentrated academic and vocational counseling on a small group basis.
4. Certain one-hour electives from the existing program would be available in the areas of physical education and choral music.
5. Individual counseling on a regular basis would be an integral part of the program.

It was recommended that the students be selected on the basis of their scores on the School and College Ability Test. Those students falling at or below the tenth percentile would be required to enroll in the Opportunity Program.

On January 21, 1965, Dr. Richardson discussed an outline of a proposal for an experimental program in general education for the educationally disadvantaged with representatives of the Danforth Foundation. At the conclusion of the discussion, Dr. Richardson was invited to submit a request for a modest grant to support the detailed development of a comprehensive proposal for this program. Before he submitted the request for the planning grant, however, two important things happened to facilitate matters. First, the Board of Trustees of the Junior College District approved the implementation of a one-year experimental program for educationally disadvantaged students

to commence at Forest Park in September, 1965. Second, Mr. Duane Anderson, a Kellogg Fellow at the University of Michigan, indicated his interest in assisting in the development of the proposal, particularly from the standpoint of accomplishing the necessary library research. On March 1, 1965, Dr. Richardson submitted a request for a planning grant to the Danforth Foundation.

Before Dr. Richardson could pursue the full-scale planning with the Danforth grant, however, he had to solidify some plans for the fall term. He seems to have been willing to follow the detailed guidelines for courses recommended by the faculty committee, but he was strongly influenced by an exciting new development. The new development was the setting up of a network of learning centers for adult education throughout the state of North Carolina. He decided to incorporate the concept of a learning center in what was now called the General Curriculum. Forest Park's learning center was called the Programmed Materials Learning Laboratory (PMLL). Although the PMLL "imported" a comprehensive set of materials from North Carolina and was open to all students on a referral basis, it housed the reading, language arts, and mathematics programs that were part of the General Curriculum. The addition of the PMLL had a formative effect on the shape of the curriculum. The curriculum recommended by the faculty committee was as follows:

First Semester:	English	3 hours
	Reading	3 hours
	Consumer Economics or Social Science	3 hours
	Mathematics or Science	3 hours
	Psychology (Counseling)	3 hours
	Elective	1 hour
Second Semester:	English	3 hours
	Reading	3 hours
	Consumer Economics or Social Science	3 hours
	Mathematics or Science	3 hours
	Psychology (Counseling)	3 hours
	Elective	1 hour

Dr. Richardson eliminated the proposed developmental reading course and substituted the SRA-RFU reading program to be administered through the PMLL. The two-semester English course emphasized humanities, whereas the PMLL emphasized grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. The mathematics course emphasized concepts like set theory, number systems, algebraic equations, whereas the PMLL math emphasized addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, elementary algebra, etc. Eventually mathematics was dropped from the general education courses of the General Curriculum and was replaced by Society and Science. The inclusion of the PMLL caused other gradual changes in the General Curriculum which will be discussed later.

When the General Curriculum started in September, 1965, there were ten "full-time" people on the staff: two counselors, six general education instructors, and two faculty members in the PMLL. They were divided into two teams with a counselor as the head of each team and both the PMLL people were regarded as members of each team. Around 150 students were registered for General Curriculum the first fall, and they were assigned courses in such a way that all of their instructors were on one team or the other. This was done to facilitate evaluation and subsequent counseling of the student.

Two other factors are worth mention. First some administrative arrangements built in conflicting loyalties. The general education instructors and the counselors were on a "divided schedule" that had them devoting only part of their "full-time" job expectations to General Curriculum and the rest of their time to their respective academic divisions. Moreover, these divided loyalties created tensions. Second, Alice Thelen, one of the counselors, immediately set up systematic research procedures and began laying the ground work for a series of excellent research reports, part of which became her doctoral dissertation.

While Dr. Richardson was setting up the General Curriculum as a pilot program for 1965-66, he was also pursuing some long-range plans. He received a planning grant from the Danforth Foundation of $7,070.00. These funds were used to study existing programs by on-site surveys and to retain consultants to provide advice and documentation for the major areas of the proposal. Two planning conferences were held in St. Louis with the consultants: one in June, 1965, for purposes of planning the proposal development, and one in September, 1965, to coordinate the conclusions reached. Consultants had been selected from universities within a reasonable radius of Forest Park, and, although their credentials were impressive, they seemed to lack a clear sense of the type of student the General Curriculum was to deal

with. Some of the consultants seemed to have been more helpful and influential than others, but on the whole Dr. Richardson seems to have followed the basic program already authorized by the Junior College District's Board of Trustees in shaping the proposal.

When the proposal was completed, it called for a continuation of the instructional set-up then in effect in the General Curriculum. But the proposal placed the General Curriculum in a much larger plan. This larger plan had two categories of objectives. The first category involved disposition of the student and may be summarized by a single term, placement, which might take any of the following forms:

1. Placement in a specific curriculum offered by the college.
2. Placement in a training program offered within the community but not under the auspices of the college.
3. Placement directly on a job that offers possibilities of advancement and appears to be consistent with the student's interests and aptitude.

The second category of objectives concerns goals which might be met concurrently by the program and would broaden its scope to a national scale of applicability and usefulness, which might include the following:

1. The development of a model program for educationally disadvantaged students with a consistent theoretical rationale that could serve as a guide for the administrators and staff personnel of other institutions confronted by similar conditions.
2. The establishment of an active program of community involvement seeking to provide leadership and direction to a multitude of community, state, and federal organizations having an interest or a responsibility in this program. Such a blueprint for community mobilization should have far reaching consequences.
3. The offering of an internship experience for present and prospective instructors interested in teaching the disadvantaged student.
4. The development of curriculum materials and instructional aids specifically designed with the needs of this group of students in mind.
5. The evaluation of effectiveness of materials and techniques developed for the disadvantaged students.
6. The development and dissimination of information concerning the characteristics of disadvantaged students and successful methods of teaching them.

This program was not only going to be ambitious, it was going to be expensive. Dr. Richardson's original timetable had expressed the hope that the proposal might be initiated with major foundation support by July 1, 1966. In the Spring of 1966, the Junior College District Board of Trustees extended the General Curriculum for a second year. Concurrent with the development of the educational program, a $803,442 proposal was written and submitted to the Danforth Foundation and the United States Office of Education for funding. The Danforth Foundation agreed to provide $250,000 contingent upon the United States Office of Education picking up the remainder. After a prolonged delay, the District was informed that the Office's present interests and obligations were not consistent with accepting responsibility for funding this project. After receipt of this information, a staff study was initiated in the Fall of 1966 at the request of the Danforth Foundation to determine if the original $250,000 pledged could serve a useful purpose in the development of the General Curriculum. The budget for the proposal was revised. Overall it was reduced by $212,873, but the Junior College District increased its proportion by $340,547, to a total of $1,313,029 over three years. The Danforth Foundation agreed to match this with $250,000 over three years beginning in 1967-68. At the same time that this revision was being negotiated, Dr. Moore, Associate Dean of the General Curriculum, was preparing to submit a revised proposal to the Office of Economic Opportunity. Although this proposal requested only $65,598 to set up an Occupational Placement Program on a pilot basis for 1967-68, it too failed.

While the lack of funds kept the General Curriculum from implementing some of the more ambitious aspects of the proposal, changes were gradually being made in the General Curriculum. Basic Science was dropped after 1965-66, and Basic Biology and History of Science were added for 1966-67. Biology was continued in 1967-68. English became known as Basic Humanities after the first year and continued as a two-semester course. Basic Sociology, Consumer Economics, and Group Guidance continued to evolve from the original planning committee's design. Because of a sharp increase in the number of students utilizing the PMLL (742 for Fall 1967, compared to 311 for Fall 1966), some changes seemed warranted. Instead of offering either a three or five hour package called Basic Academic Skills, changes were proposed in Spring 1967 to offer Program Materials Learning Laboratory - A (3 hours) and - B (6 hours), Mathematics Laboratory, Reading Laboratory, Writing Laboratory, and Developmental Reading. The idea was that the PMLL sections would be individualized, self-help instruction with programmed materials, and the lab courses would be applications in a class context of what had been learned. The following year (1968-69) this evolved into a series of courses designated as PMLL - Math (3 hours), Math Lab - (2 hours), PMLL - Grammar (3 hours), Writing Lab (2 hours), and Reading Lab (2 hours).

In other words, there was a gradual move away from a complete reliance on programmed materials for basic skills to a reliance reinforced and supplemented by a classroom application of the learning. The gradual changes were initiated by the faculty. In some cases (the change from Basic Science to History of Science, for instance) the changes indicated only changes in personnel. In other cases the changes were a manifestation of the self-dissatisfaction of the faculty with their courses. Although Dr. Thelen had been providing regular reports of student evaluations of each course and research reports of changes in student attitudes and characteristics, these feedback mechanisms seem not to have provided a basis for altering the program. In the opinion of one person, who was a member of the General Curriculum faculty at that time, the program was faculty-centered, and the faculty did not understand Dr. Thelen's reports sufficiently to use them as planning aids.

In addition to the instructional changes, there had been an administrative change in the status of the General Curriculum. In January, 1967, the General Curriculum Division was established. The divisional objectives were the same as those for the General Curriculum Program, but the faculty was designated as full-time General Curriculum faculty and new faculty would be hired by General Curriculum rather than the other, academic, division. Moreover, the budget for the PMLL would be part of the new General Curriculum division budget, not a part of the instructional resources' budget. These changes relieved some tensions by eliminating sources of divided loyalties and conflicting interests. Dr. Thelen was designated Division Chairman, and Dr. Moore was Associate Dean for the General Curriculum.

The academic year 1968-69 was one of stabilization for the General Curriculum. The turnover in faculty caused some modification of course content and emphasis, but the overall number of courses, the official designations and hours of courses remained the same as before. However, it was during this year that the proposals for Project AHEAD and for a pilot project in flexible, non-directive education were developed.

The funding for Project AHEAD was granted, and it began in 1968-69. Project Ahead was to recruit black inner-city youth, prepare them in whatever ways necessary for college, place them in a program in one of the cooperating colleges, and assist them financially and in whatever other ways were necessary to get them through college. It was generally thought that Project Ahead students who were educationally disadvantaged could benefit from the General Curriculum. But when it actually came down to setting up the additional sections for these new students, "coordinators" from the staffs of the cooperating colleges were designated as instructors, and they were paid by their home colleges. The General Curriculum staff

in math and writing was increased to accomodate the new students. By setting up a parallel faculty for the general education and group guidance courses Project AHEAD became a rather autonomous instructional unit. Although the courses had the same names and frequently the same tests, there was little professional interaction among the instructional staffs of the General Curriculum students; they had the same math and writing instructors, but they were in separate sections. Consequently Project Ahead has had very little effect on the development of the General Curriculum to date.

The follow-up effect of the pilot project of the Fall 1969, on the other hand, seems to have been slightly greater. The pilot project involved a group of 30 self-selected students from the group of full-time General Curriculum students. They were expected to appear in the project room (lounge) a minimum number of hours each week. They would plan all of their own activities with two staff members, Al Svanoe and Dick Sadler. Thanks to the Danforth Foundation, they had a Volkswagen bus at their disposal. The pilot project was for one semester, and a research program had been set up to evaluate its effect. The overall conclusion was that the pilot program did not cause any significant differences among the self-selected students and the regular General Curriculum students, except for a strong sense of groupness. On the other hand, the pilot program had no adverse effects on the students, and in the students, and in this way it became an example for the rest of the faculty of an entirely different approach to educating the same type of student. This example took on greater significance in the Spring 1970 when the General Curriculum faculty began to redesign the curriculum.

Several factors influenced Betty Pollard's decision to ask the faculty to redesign the curriculum during her first year as division chairman. First, the students had changed. When the General Curriculum started, the students did not object to a year-long non-credit program. However, the students of late had begun to object both the length of the program and to the lack of credit. Second, the faculty, perhaps in response to student pressure, had recommended almost everyone out of General Curriculum at the end of the first semester. Since the beginning of the program, the faculty had always recommended some outstanding students out of the program. A two-semester program had virtually become a one-semester program. With so few continuing students only a few General Curriculum sections could "make", and this led to an appearance that General Curriculum was overstaffed. This apperance was further reinforced by the decline in new enrollees in the Spring, due to the elimination of January graduation from the city high schools. There was a problem of what to do with the faculty, but at the same time this slack period provided an opportunity for some serious planning. Third, some members

of the faculty were dissatisfied with the program as it was. In the past the faculty members had on occasion been dissatisfied with their parts of the program and had moved to change them. In this case, however, some faculty members were dissatisfied with others, not just themselves.

The faculty-centered approach to learning seemed to carry over into redesigning the curriculum. Despite the fact that student pressure had been instrumental in starting the move toward change, the students were not consulted in any systematic way. Neither a student evaluation of the current program, not an opportunity for student suggestions for a future program was built into the redesigning process. The faculty members exercised complete control, but the aggressive criticism of some caused others to temporarily resist the idea of any change. Only after Mrs. Pollard said that the changes would be on an experimental basis for one year only did the faculty begin to develop a collegial approach to the redesign. The old pattern of consultants and site visits was repeated, because Danforth money was available for these things. Once again the effect of the consultants was negligible; on the other hand, the site visits to Miami-Dade North and South, Santa Fe Community College, Glendale College, Kendall College, Macomb County Community College, and Galveston College did arouse the imagination and enthusiasm of those who went, but they were the ones promoting change from the outset. The basic "camps" both before and after the site visits were those who wanted a structured learning experience and those who wanted a nonstructured learning experience. In the end the members of the two opposing camps agreed to co-exist. There would be a Program A which would be structured, and a Program B which would be relatively unstructured. Program A was not as structured as the General Curriculum program had been previously; electives in all of the areas of general education would be offered instead of a set package, and Group Guidance would be replaced by a Human Potential Seminar. Program B, on the other hand, would not be as unstructured as the pilot project had been; it would have a definite series of elective workshops, and these would have mandatory attendance but the students would help plan some of the activities; Program B also retained the idea of common group experiences and field trips from the pilot study; in Program B Group Guidance would be replaced by a Human Relations Lab. The students would be in these two programs for the first eight weeks of the semester. During the second eight weeks they would be in a new series of elective workshops or general education courses, or in a double-timed transfer course. This latter option built the opportunity for transfer credit into General Curriculum for the first time; the other General Curriculum courses were to carry "developmental" credit which could be used to fulfill elective opportunities in non-transfer programs. Throughout the entire sixteen-week semester the students in both Program A and Program B took PMLL - Math, Math Lab, Writing Lab, and, if necessary, Reading Lab. The writing program had been revised for 1969-70 to emphasize fluency and to use tape recordings

instead of emphasizing the mechanics of writing and using programmed materials. The writing program was revised again from 1970-71 to include subject matter from Programs A and B along with tapes by those instructors, and the students were expected to discuss the material in regularly scheduled small group meetings; there was still a group tutorial session with the instructor, but all remnants of the early PMLL approach had disappeared. Those who completed the new course with an A would get one semester's English credit for a two-year program. The math program remained basically the same as before; new programmed material was used, but it was still the old PMLL approach. Reading Lab did not change substantially.

The redesign suggested in the Spring of 1970 was pursued, although this pursuit left several problems unresolved. The redesign was carefully planned in the Summer and completely implemented in the Fall. The Danforth grant covered the Spring site visits, consultants, and the Summer planning, but the grant expired at the end of Summer 1970. Since the redesign was pursued as a one-year experimental program, the expiration of the grant left serious questions about the subsequent follow-up to the redesign. The nature of the experimental redesign enhanced the problem. The plan called for a one-semester program divided into two eight-week sessions with the students divided into two distinct programs, A and B, during the first eight-week session. In addition to the problems created by this experimental design and those connected with the expiration of the grant, two other significant problems remained unresolved. The recurrent small Spring enrollment in the General Curriculum had not been dealt with, and no satisfactory arrangements were made to fully utilize the full-time faculty in the Spring. The second major problem had to do with the status of Project Ahead in relation to the General Curriculum. Although Project Ahead was a part of the administrative unit called the General Curriculum division, it had a separate teaching staff for its general education and guidance courses. Project Ahead continued to offer the first semester of the old General Curriculum package of general education and group guidance courses, while the Project Ahead students took the revised basic skills courses with the General Curriculum staff. The educational advantages that could have been possible by cooperative planning between both staffs went unrealized, largely because of the time demands of the non-teaching responsibilities of the Project Ahead staff.

During 1970-71 two external events affected the General Curriculum. One was the decision of the Ford Foundation not to continue funding Project Ahead. Since the Junior College District was not in a position

to finance this, the gradual phase-out of Project Ahead began. The students currently in the program were guaranteed that the program would continue to help them financially and academically, and the counselors were retained to continue these services. But no new students would be admitted to the program, and this meant that the separate teaching staff was no longer needed. Some of these teachers were hired by the General Curriculum to fill vacancies caused by a turnover in the General Curriculum faculty. The second external event affecting General Curriculum was the funding of the Cooperative Education program. The funds came from the federal government through the state government. The Junior College District Board of Trustees accepted the offered funds in Spring, 1971, and the program officially began in Fall, 1971. Cooperative Education is a Supervised Employment program. The student works under approved supervisors and participates in a special college seminar, and he receives Junior college credit for doing this. In addition, the student takes a series of regular General Curriculum or other courses. The program attempts to help prospective students find jobs in fields of their interest where employers are willing to cooperate with the college's requirements, but the program also tries to work out arrangements for students to receive credit and the necessary additional on-the-job assistance for jobs they already hold. This program is a faint echo of one of the original goals of General Curriculum, namely job training (see p.5, #2 above). However, this program has work and study coordinated, whereas the early job training objective was aimed at training programs offered within the community but not under the auspices of the college. Co-op education is under the auspices of the College insofar as the training organization signs a contract with the college and the student receives some supervision and credit from the college. But the businesses in the community are the sources of the actual job training. Both of these external events affected the administrative organization of the General Curriculum. In the first case, the dual staff situation was eliminated. In the second case, the Cooperative Education program merely became an addition to the General Curriculum. Rather than a separate director and special teachers to supervise the students' work programs, the Co-op program utilized the General Curriculum staff for the other courses in the students' programs.

The experimental redesign of the General Curriculum was implemented in Fall, 1970, and the results were inconclusive. There were no significant differences between Program A and Program B. These two programs lasted for the first eight weeks. Although one was more structured than the other, there was no significant difference in the academic performance of either group of students during the second eight weeks as measured by grades or by informal faculty feedback. Moreover, the human relations labs of the non-structured program did not yield any significant differences in the personality inventories of students in Program B as measured by the California Psychological Inventory on a pre and post basis at the beginning and end of the semester. Nor did the structured program with its human potential seminars yield any significant differences in the personality

inventories of students in Program A. Nor were there significant differences between the two groups of students. The lack of significant differences both in academic performance and in personality growth had some consequences in terms of the follow-up to the experimental redesign.

The Spring 1971 saw the General Curriculum with about one fourth the student enrollment of the Fall. The Spring program was more the proven structured approach, although some fluid workshops were offered. The equivocal outcome of the non-structured program contributed to this to some extent. In addition, the tremendous administrative hassles involved with the non-structured program worked against continuation of the dual program. Another major factor, however, was the decisions of several of the promoters of the non-structured program to get out of teaching in the General Curriculum in order to pursue other interests.

Their decisions not to continue teaching in General Curriculum also influenced the Spring planning for Fall 1971. Since these individuals were not involved in the planning session, the non-structured approach was abandoned early in the discussion. Only the faculty who had taught in the structured program, that year and previous years, remained to teach in the program in the Fall. Once again faculty turnover demonstrated how totally faculty-centered the curriculum was. Student input in the curriculum planning was minimal. Students had favorably evaluated many aspects of the Writing program, but there was no systematic student evaluation of the other courses. Not only was there minimal indirect student feedback, there was no direct student participation in the planning. The faculty relied on past experience and personal judgment in planning the future.

The Spring planning sessions pursued some old ideas and introduced some new ideas. The most important old idea was the business of transfer credit for General Curriculum students. The faculty agreed to offer a package of courses, and each student was to be allowed to take one transfer course in his package of courses. The transfer courses were to be taught by the General Curriculum faculty, and they were to involve more contact hours in the classroom than the same course offered in the regular college. In one sense the General Curriculum became a college-within-a-college, albeit a one-semester college. The General Curriculum offered transfer courses in accounting, biology, history, political science, and sociology. Each student would take one of these, and the rest of the package was to include one general education course, the basic skills courses, and a human potential seminar. All of these carried developmental credit, and a student in a two-year career program could use up to nine hours of developmental courses as electives in his program. The general education

courses offered were basic humanities, basic science, basic sociology, city politics, and contemporary science. The basic skills courses offered were math lab, math work, reading lab and writing lab. All of these curriculum plans involved old, proven ideas. The major new idea was the suggestion of interrelating the General Curriculum courses wherever possible to create a more coherent package for the student. This suggestion involved identifying some of the skills required in two or more courses (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, note-taking, etc.) and attempting to establish common standards and common teaching techniques. This idea was pursued at some length but never fully implemented. Another major new idea was the establishment of clearly defined exit criteria (exit here means that the General Curriculum would have no "hold" on the student after one semester in General Curriculum; he would be free to choose his courses without restriction). In the past the exit criteria were vague and ill-defined, and the faculty recommendation for or against exit was usually subjective and sometimes arbitrary. The new exit criteria were based on the grade point average earned by the student while in the General Curriculum:

3.5 - 4.0	GPA would mean the student may take up to 12 transfer hours the second semester.
2.6 - 3.4	GPA would mean the student may take a maximum of only 9 transfer hours; the student may also take developmental credit courses in addition to transfer courses.
1.5 - 2.5	GPA would mean that the student may take a maximum of only 6 transfer hours, and he must take 6 non-transfer credit hours in the General Curriculum if he wished to be a full-time student; the student may elect to become a Special student and carry only 6 hours of his choice.
0.0 - 1.4	GPA would mean the student must take a full load of General Curriculum courses or become a Special student and carry only 6 hours.

These plans were implemented in the Fall 1971.

Critical Summary

The General Curriculum has fluctuated in some ways within identifiable limits and has gradually changed in other ways. Biology was offered in the early years, then dropped, and now it is back. Consumer economics has been replaced by applied accounting. History and political science have alternated, but both are now in the program. Human potential seminars have replaced group guidance courses. But basic humanities, basic sociology, basic science, math, and reading have been stable parts of

the program. These courses have provided continuity in the General Curriculum program despite faculty turnover. The Writing Lab has always been a part of the program, although it changed from an emphasis on grammar, punctuation, and spelling to an emphasis on fluency and organization. The major growth within these limits has been the gradual evolution from a totally non-credit situation to one of developmental credit that could count as electives in some programs to the inclusion of some transfer courses. The gradual de facto shifts from a two-semester to a one-semester program has also been significant.

There have been a number of recurring problems in the General Curriculum. First of all, the continuous turnover of faculty has limited the coherence and continuity of the program. Second, there seems to have been a general lack of communication among the professional staff. The turnover rate certainly affected this. The fact that the offices of faculty members were one-eighth of a mile apart on two different floors did not help communication, but the proximity of faculty offices since Fall, 1970 has not altered the situation. Despite these factors, the General Curriculum faculty has lacked a sense of professionalism. Third, the expectations of both students and faculty have not always been realistic. The original formulators of the General Curriculum were realistic. They wanted the General Curriculum to have a placement office to help General Curriculum students get jobs after they completed the programs in General Curriculum, but this service was never offered. The implicit expectation subsequently came to be that all General Curriculum students would go into other programs at Forest Park. However, the early sophisticated research by Alice Thelen reinforced the expectations of the original formulators. In "A Study of Academic Characteristics of General Curriculum Students After One Semester, One Year, in the General Curriculum Program," Thelen concludes:

> "If program success is to be measured by significant gains made by students, the above data would support the contention that the program was quite successful. Gains do reach numerical significance, and yet there is considerable doubt that the level attained on post-testing represents enough of an increase to warrant transfer of the <u>average</u> one-semester or one-year General Curriculum student to any technical or transfer program at the college." (p. 98)

Fourth, the lack of consistent, systematic institutional research has made planning difficult. The faculty has no objective, reliable feedback on the after-effects of their educational treatment of the student. Fifth, the General Curriculum program has been consistently faculty-centered. Perhaps the lack of reliable research contributes to this, but there has been only limited and indirect student input or student feedback into planning the General Curriculum program. Sixth, the General Curriculum courses have not been as interrelated as they could have been. The lack of communication among the professional staff and the lack of a sense of professionalism (problems in the rest of the college as well as General Curriculum) have contributed to this. But even communication and professionalism would not have guaranteed interrelated courses. The courses offered by the General Curriculum could have been offered by the regular academic departments as remedial level courses, and those courses would have been unrelated both in learning objectives and in teaching techniques. But one of the alleged reasons for the existence of the General Curriculum as a separate division was to create the possibility of an interrelated curriculum. This possibility has never been realized.

Despite the shortcomings of the General Curriculum, however, it has generally been regarded as a successful attempt to do a necessary job. The General Curriculum is known nationally, and Bill Moore's Against the Odds is mostly about the General Curriculum. There has been favorable feedback from many students, and the faculty members who have stayed with the program over the years feel that it is performing a vital function.